

Solomon Baker House  
Shelton Avenue  
Alexandria  
Huntingdon County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5404

HABS  
PA,  
31-ALEX,  
7-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SOLOMON BAKER HOUSE

HABS No. PA-5404

HABS  
PA  
31-ALEX,  
7-

Location: The Solomon Baker house is located on the north side of Shelton Avenue, three lots west of High Street in Alexandria, Porter Township, Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania.

Present Owner: Charles Brenneman.

Present Use: Single-family dwelling.

Significance: The house that Solomon Baker erected about mid-century and occupied for a decade represents a large residence with late-Federal characteristics overshadowed by Victorian elements that were added late in the century--a common pattern of architectural amalgamation as the canal activities of this period attracted money and taste to Alexandria.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: ca. 1846. According to 1846 tax records, Solomon Baker was taxed for a \$600 "new house," which was not in records of the previous year.
2. Original and subsequent owners: Lot Nos. 74 and 75 in the original plan for Alexandria front 120' on the south side of Shelton Avenue, and extend north 200' to an alley.

The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which the structure stands. Reference is to the Recorder of Deeds Office of the County of Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.

1843 Deed March 27, 1843, recorded in Volume F2, Page 310.  
Thomas B. and Margaret Ann Patterson  
TO  
Solomon Baker.

1853 Deed August 16, 1853, recorded in Volume I2, Page 470.  
William Zeigler, Sheriff  
TO  
Mary Neff.

1889 Deed January 1889, recorded in Volume W3, Page 292.  
Heirs of Mary Neff  
TO  
Samuel Hatfield.

1921 Deed December 3, 1921, recorded in Volume P6, Page 544.

Samuel Hatfield Jr. (executor for Samuel Hatfield Sr.)  
TO  
Mary Stryker (Hatfield Sr.'s daughter).

1958 Deed December 17, 1958, recorded in Volume 36, Page 151.  
Mabel S. and Chalmers Brumbaugh; Mary S. and Henry Conner; Annie  
Black; Ella S. Phillips, guardian of Eliabeth Neff Stryker (incompetent)  
TO  
Charles D. and Betty Brenneman.

3. Original plans and construction: No original plans or drawings have been located. Built as a two-story, five-bay residence, the interior was probably arranged on a center-hall plan.
4. Alterations and additions: Stained-glass windows around the front door and over the main stairwell on the north wall were probably added in the late 1800s when many Alexandria houses were updated using Victorian details. The three-sided bay window on the south facade and heavily bracketed front porch were also added at this time, based on their design.

A wood porch has been recently added to the second floor, rear facade, supported by cinder-block piers, at least at the northeast corner. A cinder-block chimney on the northeast gable slope of the east wall is also new.

- B. Historical Context: In 1847 Jacob Baker sued Samuel Baker for work and material on a two-story frame dwelling, valued at \$561; Jacob Baker had a mechanic's lien on the property. When Mary Neff gained title to the property in the 1880s, according to a local historian, a relative of hers built a Victorian house on the adjacent lot, which probably accounts for the addition of Victorian details to that structure (Harshbarger, interview).

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is a five-bay, Federal-style structure that has been updated through the addition of Victorian elements.
2. Condition of the fabric: Fair.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The main block is approximately 40' x 25'; the single-story addition, 12' x 20'.
2. Foundations: Stone.

3. Wall construction: Wood covered with synthetic or aluminum siding.
4. Structural system, framing: Frame.
5. Porches: A one-story, partial front porch shelters the central three bays; the hipped roof is supported by six Victorian turnposts with extravagant brackets.
6. Chimneys: One interior gable-end chimney remains on the east end; its mate on the west gable fell off, according to the Huntingdon County Historic Society survey form.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The wood front door features a three-light stained-glass transom and four-light flanking sidelights.
  - b. Windows: The first- and second-story windows are a mix of six-over-six-light and one-over-one-light wood sash; the latter replacing the former. The only variation from this scheme are the six-light attic windows and the tall, round-topped windows in the Victorian bay, two-over-two-light and one-over-one-light sash.
8. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Side-gabled covered with asbestos shingles.
  - b. Cornice: Wood box cornice.
- C. Site: The Solomon Baker House is situated in a residential neighborhood in the northeast end of town. It is bounded on the rear by a public alley.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

#### A. Primary and unpublished sources:

Porter Township tax records, 1819 to 1859, Huntingdon County Historical Society.

Alexandria Borough tax records, 1859 to 1873, Huntingdon County Historical Society and Huntingdon County Courthouse.

Huntingdon County Deed Books and Probate Records, Huntingdon County Courthouse, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.

Huntingdon County Tax Map -- Alexandria, 01-02-21.

Huntingdon County Historical Society survey sheets.

Interview with Jean Harshbarger, August 20, 1988.

B. Secondary and published sources:

Africa, J. Simpson. History of Huntingdon and Blair Counties, Pennsylvania. Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1883.

Harshbarger, Jean P., Nancy R. Taylor, Sara H. Zabriskie, and F.R. Zabriskie. Hartslog Heritage. State College, Pennsylvania: K-B Offset Printing, Inc., 1975.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was conducted by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record in cooperation with the America's Industrial Heritage Project under the directorship of Randy Cooley; AIHP is an undertaking of the National Park Service, based in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania. Recorded under the direction of Robert J. Kapsch, chief of HABS/HAER, the project was completed during summer 1988 at the HABS field office in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Project leader was Alison K. Hoagland, senior HABS historian; field supervisor was Dorothy Burlingame, University of Vermont; project historian, Karen Genskow, Sangamon State University. Large-format photography is by David Ames. Editing of the final report was done by Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.

This report was completed as part of a larger project documenting two canal towns--Saltsburg, on the Western Division of the Pennsylvania Mainline Canal, and Alexandria, on the Juniata Division--flanking the Allegheny Divide. Twenty-one reports on other buildings in Alexandria, an overview history of Alexandria (HABS No. PA-5407), and of canal town development in Pennsylvania (HABS No. PA-5666) are part of the HABS/HAER collection. Twenty-two reports on buildings in Saltsburg (Indiana County) and an overview history of Saltsburg (HABS No. PA-5438) are also available. Results of the project were published as Two Historic Pennsylvania Canal Towns: Alexandria and Saltsburg, Sara Amy Leach, editor (Washington, DC: Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, March 1989).